PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE

1886 | GRIMSBY. | 1936

FAREWELL CONCERT

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SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1936

at 8 p.m.

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The Late Mr. H. J. CURRY

the founder of the Prince of Wales Theatre, who died in 1906.

ALD. J. H. CURRY

Chairman and Managing Director of the Prince of Wales Theatre (Grimsby), Limited, since the formation of the company.

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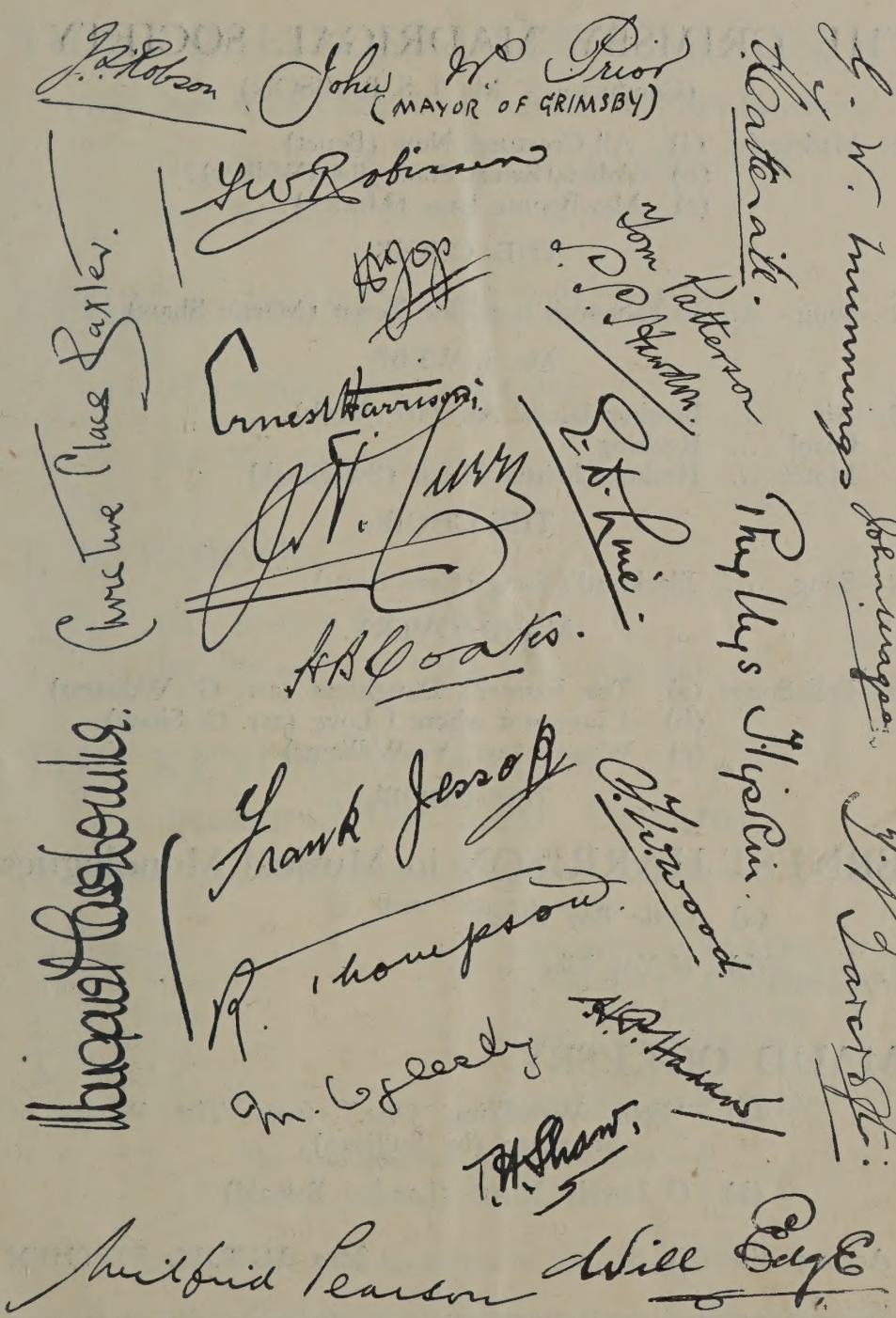

PROGR

THE GRIMSBY MADRIGAL SOCIETY

(Conductor - Mr. J. S. ROBSON).

1—Madrigals (a) All Creatures Now (Benet).
(b) Adieu, Sweet Amaryllis (Wilbye).
(c) My Bonnie Lass (Morley).

THE CHOIR.

2—Song ... O Falmouth is a Fine Town (Martin Shaw).

Mr. J. WEBB.

3—Air ... Brother James' Air (arr. Jacob).
Carol ... Rocking.
Motet ... Hodie, Christus Natus (Sweelinck).

THE CHOIR.

4—Song ... Blackbird's Song (Cyril Scott).

Miss D. OVERY.

5—Folk Songs (a) The Farmer's Daughters (arr. G. Williams)
(b) I Live not where I Love (arr. G. Shaw).
(c) Wassail (arr. V. Williams).

THE CHOIR.

ERNEST HARRISON in Musical Monologues

(a) Little Boy Blue.

(b) If You Like.

MAUD OGLESBY

(a) "Poor Wand'ring One," from The Pirates of Penzance (by Sullivan).

(b) O Lovely Night (Landon Ronald).

Accompanist ... ... Mrs. MURIEL STEPHEN

Presentation to Alderman J. H. Curry by his Wo

AMME

THE PELHAM SINGERS

(Will Edge, Frank Jessop, Fred Marshall, and Tom Patterson)

(a) Comrades Song of Hope (Adolphe Adam).

(b) Piccaninny Lullaby (J. C. Macy).

GEORGE MUNNINGS, Elocutionist

(a) A Pipe, a Stick and a Dog.

(b) The Game of Life.

J. S. ROBSON

(a) Study in A Flat (Chopin).

(b) Scherzo in C Sharp Minor (Chopin).

THE KENDAL PLAYERS
present "The Dear Departed"

A one-act play by Stanley Houghton. Characters (in order of their appearance):

Mrs. Slater	...	...	CHRISTINE BAXTER
Victoria Slater	...	...	MARGARET CASEBOURNE
Henry Slater	...	...	WILFRID PEARSON
Mrs. Jordan	...	...	PHYLLYS HIPKIN
Ben Jordon	...	...	E. D. LINE
Abel Merryweather	...	...	ERNEST HARRISON

The Play produced by Ernest Harrison.

Steinway Grand Piano kindly lent by GOUGH & DAVY, Ltd.

---

hip the Mayor (Alderman J. W. Prior).

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Public Buildings are erected and in the course of time pulled down to make way for other buildings, as illustrated by the coming demolition of the PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE. But the "Co-operative Movement" founded in 1844 is continually growing in Membership and Trade, and extending its usefulness to the community in general, and sharing the benefits with the members in particular. The Grimsby Society, which is of local interest, has shared in this progressive growth, and with the object of celebrating the Centenary—during 1944—of the birth of the Co-operative Movement by the humble Rochdale Pioneers, special efforts are being organised in connection with the CO-OP TEN YEAR PLAN to increase considerably the Membership and Trade. We are aiming to increase our membership this year by

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ENTRANCES AND EXITS

People who have Played Parts on the Prince of Wales Stage

Reminiscences by T. H. SHAW

A PILE of programmes—hundreds of them. They cover nearly forty years of the half-century of existence of this Prince of Wales Theatre, and the writer can claim to have seen, at a moderate estimate, ninety per cent. of the " shows " mentioned in these programmes.

Picking at random among the earlier years, names of plays are revealed that mean nothing to a new generation, but which were first-rate attractions to a generation that regarded an evening at " Curry's " as an indispensable item of the week's routine. High-coloured, gurgly melo-dramas like " The King of Crime " and " When London Sleeps," light drama with music such as " My Sweetheart," and musical comedies of the type of " The Lady Slavey," " Gentleman Joe " and " The French Maid "—all forgotten excepting by a steadily dwindling band of old-timers.

Having been asked to contribute some reminiscences to this souvenir programme, the difficulty is not what to put in but what to leave out. The material is enough for a volume—the space sufficient for a tract. Perhaps it will be the best plan to recall some of the famous people who have walked the stage of the Theatre, many of them now ghosts of the past, but quite a number still in the public eye.

Only a few days ago was recorded the death of Minnie Palmer. She was the yellow-haired song and dance artist who was the heroine of that pleasantly pretty-pretty light romance, " My Sweetheart." Are there readers who can recall that haunting, German band-like melody of the Tina and Tony duet ? And the picture poster of Minnie, all smiles and ringlets, glancing archly over her shoulder, and saying (according to the inscription) " Wait for me."

Then there was that other Palmer—Mrs. Bandmann Palmer, the lady tragedian who played Hamlet. Yes, a feminine impersonator of the Moody Dane. For years her portrait hung in the theatre corridor, autographed and bearing a tribute to the founder of the theatre, the late Mr. Henry James Curry,

Whoever is omitted from these rambling reminiscences there is one who must not be overlooked—Edward Compton. A survival of an older school of acting, he succeeded as few others could have done in welding old theatrical tradition to a modern stage technique. He gave us the spirit of a bygone age but without the ranting and sawing of the air that was (so one gathers) apt to be characteristic of that age. Here was an actor who could " speak the speech trippingly on the tongue," and not as the town crier might have spoken the lines.

Costume comedy was Compton's speciality, and the two parts he most favoured were the title role in "Davy Garrick" and Charles Surface in "School for Scandal." In what I believe was his last visit to Grimsby, in 1914, he gave (according to a note on the programme) his 1,884th performance of Garrick. No other actor within my experience (and I have seen at least half a dozen in the part) has got quite the same dramatic sense into the scene wherein Garrick feigns drunkenness.

It was especially appropriate that Compton should play Garrick, for he bore a striking facial resemblance to Pine's portrait of the eighteenth century actor. Although so much at home in elegant characters like Garrick and Charles Surface, and so dexterous in the delicate gesture with a lace handkerchief or a snuff-taking flourish, Compton could play other parts and play them well. For example, Claude Melnotte in "The Lady of Lyons," Alfred Evelyn in "Money," or the Cardinal in Bulwer Lytton's "Richlieu." But Compton has gone these many years, and it might be said of him, as Sheridan wrote of Garrick in his monody:—

"His memory claims the tear you gave his art."

Now for a few notes upon two other famous repertory actors of an old generation, the two Tearles—Osmond and Edmund. Each toured his own company. Of Osmond, who was reputed the better actor of the two, I saw very little, but quite a lot of Edmund. His programmes were a mixture of the more popular Shakespearean plays and romantic dramas.

A ROYAL MONSTER

He was in his element as Richard III, whom he made as thoroughgoing a monster as even Shakespeare could have imagined. How bloodcurdlingly he could snarl "Off with his head," or declaim in resounding tones, "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse." Another favourite part of this actor was Ingomar, the barbarian.

Edmund Tearle was a man of burly physique, tall and of enormous girth. This was well enough in the characters mentioned, but it was, to say the least, incongruous when he took the stage as d'Artagnan, the youthful Gascon hero of "The Three Musketeers." In physical bulk he completely overshadowed the actor playing Porthos, who, in Dumas' novel, was the giant of the musketeer comrades!

At least one great figure of the palmy days of melodrama is still in the public eye. Sam Livesey was a noted actor of that ferocious character, Ronjarre, in "The King of Crime," thirty-five or more years ago. Those were the days when the villain of the piece measured his success by the extent to which he was boohed and hissed when appearing in front of the curtain. It was then the custom, during the last interval, for the principal actors to cross the stage in turn between the curtain and the footlights, and make their bow to the audience.

In later years Sam Livesey was seen here as John Strong in "The Village Blacksmith," a typical specimen of the type of drama in which the audience had their feelings severely harrowed for three acts and enjoyed it, knowing that everything would be made right in the last act. The feature of this play was a contest between the village blacksmith and a professional wrestler, in which some old scores were paid off. It was no make-believe affair, that wrestling match. The opponents laid really violent hands upon

each other, and made it one of the most realistic sporting scenes ever put on this stage. Sam Livesey is still to be seen on the cinema screen.

Another fine figure of a man was Phillip Cunningham, delineator of Marcus Superbus when "The Sign of the Cross" first appeared here. He really looked Prefect of Rome.

Stephen T. Ewart was a favourite actor and frequent visitor here round about the period 1906 to 1912, and even later. He might have been termed the George Alexander of the provinces, and, indeed, appeared in several of that actor's parts. Percy Hutchison was another frequent and popular visitor over a long period of years, his chief success being as Monty Brewster in "Brewster's Millions."

Fred Terry made one appearance in the Theatre, in a Scottish historical romance, "The Borderer," constructed around the characters of Bothwell, Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley. The murder of Rizzio was one of its episodes. In comparatively recent times Sir Frank Benson brought his Shakespearean company here. His Shylock was the finest example of Shakespearean acting within my experience.

FAMOUS ACTRESSES

The writer is conscious of being open to the accusation of cherishing memories chiefly of male artists. The answer must be that, so far as celebrities are concerned, actors do seem to have predominated over actresses at this Theatre. There was, however, Mrs. Lewis Waller, who graced the stage on occasions, chiefly in "Zaza," but also in "Vilma" and "The Admiral's Lady." Mrs. Patrick Campbell also made one appearance in her great part as Paula, in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray."

Phyllis Neilsen-Terry was another distinguished actress visitor not many years ago, particularly in a revival of "Trilby." Her playing of this character almost made one believe in du Maurier's tragic heroine. What was even better, she was a Trilby who really could sing, and sing gloriously.

Beryl Mercer, the plaintive delineator of pathetic old ladies in modern film plays, was a visitor to the P.O.W. nearly forty years ago as one of the principals in G. R. Sims' tearful drama, "Two Little Vagabonds." She played Wally, the weakling of the two waifs—the one who said, "I should like to be a blacksmiff."

It used to be said that "the stars of Grimsby to-day are the stars of London to-morrow." For justification of this claim look over the following list of present-day stage and film notabilities: Owen Nares, Robert Donat, Ralph Lynn, Herbert Marshall, Barry Lupino, A. W. Baskcomb, Nelson Keys, Claude Allister, Minnie Rayner. They all walked the stage of this Theatre before attaining national stardom.

In these rambling reminiscences it is not possible to refer adequately to grand opera, which would need a full chapter. It is interesting to recall, however, that the Silver Jubilee of the Theatre was celebrated by a performance of "Maritana" by the J. W. Turner Opera Company, on October 4, 1911, that being the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Theatre.

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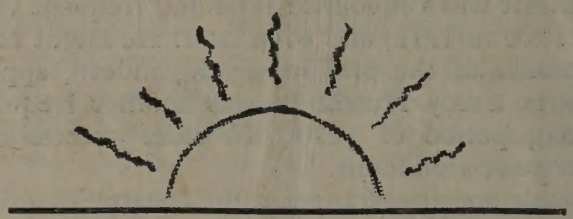
WHEN EVENING COMES



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